

REMARKS

Claims 1-10 and 12-14 are pending.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 5, 9-10 and 19 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph. This rejection was clarified by the Examiner during a telephone interview with the undersigned on November 16, 2006. During this interview, the Examiner explained that the statement "evidence of concealment of the best mode is based upon at least that there are no Figure(s) showing the adjustability" in the office action was not intended to convey that the Examiner believes that Applicants intended to conceal the best mode, but instead was included in the office action merely due to its presence in the MPEP form paragraph used by the Examiner. The Examiner also clarified that the rejection was intended to be specifically with regard to claim 11, which recites an adjusting element.

With respect to all of the rejected claims, Applicants respectfully submit that the specification includes disclosure regarding adjustability that, when combined with the knowledge of one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention, is clearly sufficient to satisfy the requirements of 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph.

However, without conceding the propriety of this rejection, Applicants voluntarily cancel dependent claim 11 in order to save expense and promote the issuance of the remaining subject matter.

Claims 1-11 and 15-21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. The Examiner states that "with regard to claims 1 & 15, these claims are apparatus claims, but written employing the action of method claims. There is no corresponding structure for the various air currents, for example." Applicants have rewritten claim 1 to include structure corresponding to the first air current. There is no structure corresponding to the other air currents, which result from the movement of the workpieces and

the combination of the first air current and the air current from the workpieces. Applicants have cancelled claim 15. Applicants respectfully request that this rejection be withdrawn.

Claims 1-21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph. The Examiner alleges that these claims are "incomplete for omitting essential elements, such omission amounting to a gap between the elements. The omitted elements are: the required geometry of the pieces such that the fluid flow is as described." Applicants believe that this rejection has been overcome by the amendment of claims 1 and 12.

Prior Art Rejections

Claims 1, 3-12, 14-15, 17-21 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Pat. No. 5,222,840 (Ingraham et al.), and claims 1-21 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ingraham et al. in view of U.S. Pat. No. 6,354,789 (Takeuchi et al.). Applicants respectfully submit that these rejections have been overcome by the amendments herein.

While it is not conceded that Applicants' claims as originally filed are anticipated by Ingraham, in order to expedite prosecution claims 1 and 12 have been amended to clearly distinguish this reference. The device disclosed by Ingraham does not include a first flow element configured to uniformly distribute the air current over the sliding surface, a second flow element configured to realize a flow profile, and a guiding element configured to direct the flow profile so that the first air current is inclined relative to the moving direction of the workpieces. These three elements, now recited in claim 1, provide optimal orientation of moving work pieces about their axes of rotation. Nor does Takeuchi supply a teaching or suggestion of this feature.

In view of the above, Applicants respectfully request that these rejections be withdrawn.

CONCLUSION

It is believed that all of the pending claims have been addressed. However, the absence of a reply to a specific rejection, issue or comment does not signify agreement with or concession of that rejection, issue or comment. In addition, because the arguments made above

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may not be exhaustive, there may be reason for patentability of any or all pending claims (or other claims) that have not been expressed. Finally, nothing in this paper should be construed as an intent to concede any issue with regard to any claim, except as specifically stated in this paper, and the amendment of any claim does not necessarily signify concession of unpatentability of the claim prior to amendment.

Enclosed is a Petition for Extension of Time for one month. Please apply all charges or credits related to this response to deposit account 06 1050, referencing the above attorney docket number.

Respectfully submitted,

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